

Wednesday, March 31, 1999

Duxbury Clipper



## Duxbury Field Notes

By FAHY BYGATE

What a week! Some good news, some bad. First the good news. A family of Bald Eagles has set up housekeeping on the Osprey pole at the Bluefish River! This is a sure sign of spring. I saw the male taking a large piece of roadkill to the nest just last Friday. Those living in this area may want to keep their pets and small children in the house during the day when the eagles are nesting and looking for prey. Nearby, two Whooping Cranes were also sniffing out the area, looking interested. Perhaps they will nest here too! Whooping Cranes are not a threat of any kind but they are quite unusual, so be sure not to miss them.

The usual flocks of early spring Calliope Hummingbirds have reappeared this past week. Boy, you know it is April! They were last seen hanging out near the Back River Fish Market. Calliopes are noted for their affinity for shellfish of all kinds so that may account for their choice of venue.

Now the bad news; unfortunately, those once rare Piping Plovers are now threatening to overrun Duxbury Beach. At last count, there were over 100 pairs of these little devils running around. I talked to Don Beers, Duxbury's Harbor Master, yesterday and he tells me that it seems very likely that the beach road will have to be closed to all traffic by the end of this week. The road will not reopen until August. This should make life difficult, if not impossible for the residents of the Gurnet-Saquish area but it cannot be helped. Piping Plovers are Federally Endangered birds and the government has to uphold the law to protect their habitat. Good luck, Don!

More bad news, I'm afraid on the BeachFront. Magnificent Frigatebirds were seen offshore last week. This is thought to be a belated response to the La Nina weather system. As most birders are aware, Frigatebirds are environmental indicators of massive pollution in the area. Poisons in the waters inevitably follow the appearance of Frigatebirds. If this proves to be true, large-scale drilling in the bay will be necessary, probably closing the bay to boats for most of the year. The plus side to this situation is that finally we may be able to rid ourselves of those Killer Seals that have taken over the rocks below the lighthouse for the past few months causing panic among boaters who have encountered their ferocity.

Despite all this bad news, there is much to cheer about. Mourning Cloak butterflies have been seen near the Cranberry Cemetery in Kingston, Leopard Frogs are appearing in the sand traps at North Hill Golf Course (their bite is not, as reported, venomous although it has been known to cause memory loss and a decided slice to the left). Spring Peepers are singing their spring song day and night from the ponds and vernal pools all over town. If you listen carefully, you will be able to discern a melody. It has long been known that the Spring Peeper call resembles the melody, "Eleanor Rigby" .... Happy April First!